

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of: *

COSCO BUSAN/BRIDGE ALLISION *

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA * Docket No.: DCA-08-MM-004

* * * * *

Interview of: CAPTAIN BLAKE CONEY

Pilot Commission Office
 Pier 9
 San Francisco, California

Friday,
 November 16, 2007

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to Notice.

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1
2 MR. BOWLING: All right, we're recording now. Sorry
3 about that. All right, this is Larry Bowling. It's still
4 the 16th of November and the Operations Group is only missing
5 Pat Moloney at this point. We're going to begin our interview of
6 Mr. Blake Coney. Correct pronunciation of your name?

7 MR. CONEY: Coney, that's correct.

8 MR. BOWLING: And a local pilot.

9 INTERVIEW OF BLAKE CONEY

10 BY MR. BOWLING:

11 Q. With that said, Captain, I will ask you to state your
12 name for the record, please.

13 A. My name is Blake Coney.

14 Q. Okay. And how can we get a hold of you if we need to
15 get a hold of you?

16 A. Telephone.

17 Q. Or contact. Would it be best to use the pilots' address
18 here?

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. Okay. And what telephone number can we get a hold of
21 you at?

22 A. Area code --- --

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. -- -----.

25 Q. ----- --

1 A. ----- --

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. -- -----

4 Q. -----, okay. Captain, can you tell me just a
5 little bit about your education since high school, both from a
6 standpoint of non-maritime and maritime training and summarize it?
7 Try to get a feel for your experience level.

8 A. I went to a junior college to get some math grades up
9 and then I went to California Maritime Academy.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And that pretty much -- my formal education ended there.

12 Q. Okay. When did you graduate from Cal Maritime?

13 A. 1980.

14 Q. Okay. What type of license do you presently hold, both
15 federal and state?

16 A. I have a 1600 ton Masters. It's a towing license. And
17 then I have a third mate/some limited license.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Federal pilotage for our jurisdiction.

20 Q. Okay. What about state license?

21 A. Well, I hold a state pilot's license.

22 Q. Okay. And keep in mind, a lot of things we know, but we
23 have to get them on the --

24 A. Of course.

25 Q. -- record. Okay, Captain, the -- so when did you first

1 get your state pilot's license?

2 A. Well, it was 14 years ago September, so 1993.

3 Q. Okay. Have you been working with the San Francisco Bar
4 Pilots since then or have you had other affiliations?

5 A. No, just the pilots.

6 Q. Pilot group here?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And do you have a position title with the pilots
9 and are you holding any position of -- function other than pilot?

10 A. No, just (indiscernible), yeah.

11 Q. Okay. All right. Reason we asked you to come here
12 today is the fact that you had some, at least some knowledge of
13 the incident surrounding the allision which took place on the 7th
14 of November. So rather than -- I guess I'll just kind of get
15 straight to the point. On that date, on the 7th of November, do
16 you recall the -- your first interaction or when the first time
17 you heard the vessel Cosco Busan, whether it was a dispatch? Were
18 you looking -- can you tell me when you first became aware the
19 vessel was in port, maybe? Start at that point, on the 6th.

20 A. That it was in port?

21 Q. Right, when it came in.

22 A. Well, the only way I would know is by looking at our
23 list.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. I was on the board at that time, so --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- as you scan the list for, you know, your possible
3 assignments, I may have seen it there.

4 Q. Okay. Pilot Nyborg brought it in, to Berth 56. Did you
5 have any involvement with it on the dates of the 6th, at all --

6 A. (indiscernible).

7 Q. -- part of that? Okay. So on the date of the 7th, how
8 did you get, basically, involved so that you found yourself on the
9 bridge after the vessel had allided with the -- or the bridge's
10 ship after the vessel had allided with the -- or the bridge's ship
11 after the vessel had allided with the support structure, Tower D?

12 A. I was in the locker room down here at the pilot office
13 talking with Pete McIsaac, Port Agent, as I recall Greg Wall (ph.)
14 came running in and said that there had been -- that somebody hit
15 the Delta Tower with a ship.

16 Q. Okay. So you were at the pilots' office, which is just
17 down the pier here --

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. -- Pier 9. And who was that that came in and briefed
20 that?

21 A. Captain Greg Wall.

22 Q. Greg Wall, okay.

23 A. He had been in dispatch. He was in for an assignment or
24 had completed his assignment, but at any rate, he was the one that
25 came in and -- to let Pete know that we had a problem.

1 Q. Okay. Do you recall what Captain Wall relayed to
2 Captain Isaac or McIsaac?

3 A. As I recall, he said that John Cota just hit the Delta
4 Tower of the Bay Bridge.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. That's what I recall.

7 Q. All right. And you and Captain McIsaac were in, again,
8 the pilot facility, was it you were in the office portion, the
9 galley portion?

10 A. We were in the locker room.

11 Q. In the locker room, okay. I think you told me that,
12 sorry. All right. Do you know how Greg Wall heard that?
13 Was -- he heard it over the radio?

14 A. I think he was in the dispatch office --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- when the call came in.

17 Q. Okay. Okay, but at that point, what did Captain McIsaac
18 say or do?

19 A. Well, we left the locker room, headed for dispatch and
20 the boat operator for the pilot run boat was thereby dispatched
21 and Pete pretty much told them we'll be headed out here
22 directly --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- to survey damage, get the boat ready, get ready to do
25 it and then we all got on the boat and headed out to the Delta

1 Tower.

2 Q. What's the name of the pilot boat that you were --

3 A. The pilot boat Golden Gate.

4 Q. Golden Gate. Who was the operator that day?

5 A. Rory Sheridan (ph.).

6 Q. Okay, is he just a -- was he a pilot or is he a
7 licensed -- a hundred ton license or --

8 A. I don't know what license he holds, but he's a boat
9 operator, not a pilot.

10 Q. Not a pilot, okay. Okay. So at that point, you, the
11 vessel operator and Captain McIsaac dispatched to survey the
12 tower?

13 A. Yeah. And Greg Wall went with us.

14 Q. And Greg Wall went with you, as well, okay. All right.
15 So can you walk me through -- what happened after you got
16 underway? Walk me through the route of travel with the vessel
17 and --

18 A. Pier 9, pretty much direct course to the Delta Tower.
19 At some point, we smelled the bunker fuel. It was a foggy
20 morning, as you guys know.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. We went down, took a look at the abutment to the bridge
23 and then headed to the ship and -- I'm sorry, I have to back up.
24 Frank Hoburg was on that boat, as well. He was a pilot that
25 standing by for another ship that was cancelled, coming out of the

1 long wharf, and Peter told him that he wanted to put him on the
2 ship to get -- you know, he was fresh --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- and so when we got to the ship, Frank boarded up. He
5 went up the ladder to --

6 Q. Okay. So on the vessel that day on the Golden Gate,
7 Captain Hoburg, Captain McIsaac, yourself, Captain Wall and then
8 the vessel operator?

9 A. Yes. And a deckhand.

10 Q. And a deckhand, okay. All right. So once you got
11 underway from the mooring here at the pilots' office, you headed
12 toward the Delta span?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And when did you first smell or see oil?

15 A. Smelled it before we saw it. I don't know, maybe -- I
16 don't know.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But it was minutes, you know.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. I mean, it -- because that's a fast boat and we were
21 hustling down there, so I don't know what the -- the time it would
22 take --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- but halfway, you could smell that bunker. See,
25 it's --

1 Q. All right.

2 A. -- distinct.

3 Q. Well, what were the -- given the fact -- you did state
4 the weather conditions were bad and we've explored that a little
5 bit, as a team, but how were you -- do you recall seeing the radar
6 on the vessel, Golden Gate? How was the Golden Gate being
7 navigated by the master? Were you -- I'm not sure how it's
8 outlined. Is the passenger configuration away from the pilot
9 house or is it like an all-crew boat?

10 A. No, it's a crew boat.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. But we were talking amongst ourselves and just --

13 Q. (indiscernible), okay.

14 A. -- you know. Yeah. And as I recall, I was more aft,
15 you know.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. So there's bodies blocking it.

18 Q. Right. What kind of visibility did you have from that
19 vessel at that time, do you recall?

20 A. I don't.

21 Q. All right, well --

22 A. I mean, visibility was poor. I recall not seeing the
23 bridge when we left the pilot office, but when it came into view,
24 I couldn't tell you.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. When I'm piloting, you're constantly checking --

2 Q. Right, right.

3 A. -- but this was a boat ride and --

4 Q. Understand. Yeah, and I'm just trying to get an idea,
5 we're -- you know, (indiscernible) here. I want to figure out how
6 bad the fog was. When you just made a comment, you said that you
7 didn't see it -- you didn't see the bridge from the pilot
8 station --

9 A. I don't recall seeing it from the pilot station.

10 Q. Sometimes, in light fog, do you see it? Can you see it
11 from the pilot station? How far of a distance is that?

12 A. From the pilot office to the bridge?

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. Oh, it's a mile.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I mean, the way it --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- comes across.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. And fog patterns and all that.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. You know, so it goes from all ranges, you know.

23 Q. Okay, right. What we'll probably do -- for my own
24 benefit, I'm going to walk down, I'm going to take a look out with
25 no fog, just from the pilot station where the mooring is, just to

1 get a better idea of what we're -- I haven't had a chance to get
2 out to the site, yet, either. Okay, so you made an assessment of
3 the fendering system on the bridge.

4 A. Well, we looked at it.

5 Q. Looked at it, yeah, but you realized --

6 A. (indiscernible) knows what they're looking at --

7 Q. Yeah, yeah.

8 A. -- to make an assessment.

9 Q. Was there debris around there, floating debris of any
10 type? Wood?

11 A. Probably. But you know, we're just -- I was just
12 looking where the fender had been ripped away --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- where there was obviously --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- oil on the cement.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. We're looking for fractures or --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. You know, as I said, I don't know what I'm looking at --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- but there were no steel hanging off it.

23 Q. Yeah, okay. Were you smelling fuel at that time?

24 A. Smelling fuel.

25 Q. Did you recall seeing any fuel in the water or --

1 A. No, but I wasn't looking in the water.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But as we approached the ship, I would say, you know, to
4 anticipate your question, which I probably shouldn't be doing, as
5 we approached the ship, then it became very apparent that --

6 Q. Oil was coming --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Or the ship was -- all right, oil. Did -- well, you
9 started saying when you approached the ship, once you left the
10 area on the Golden Gate, the motor vessel Golden Gate, you know,
11 where you were in around Tower Delta --

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. -- did you immediately go to the ship?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Was there some radio traffic going on? Can you
16 walk me through what was going on with cell phone traffic and
17 radio traffic on the motor vessel, Golden Gate, once you -- once
18 the team got up to the fendering system there? Do you recall?

19 A. What I recall is McIsaac on the telephone.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I believe that he was talking to the captain of the
22 port, you know, letting him know there was damage, there's oil.
23 As far as that, that -- you know, that's it for cell phone for
24 that part of it. Once we got underway, until we boarded Frank on
25 the ship and it's him making the calls to the captain of the port,

1 I don't know who else he called.

2 Q. Okay. Did you hear any of the conversation from -- I
3 know you were not privy to the other side, but did you hear one
4 side of the conversations?

5 A. Not really.

6 Q. Okay. Did you see the operator of the motor vessel
7 Golden Gate making any radio traffic or VHF traffic anywhere?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I have no recollection of that.

11 Q. Who was directing his -- who was his -- who was
12 directing his movement of the pilot boat, the -- with regard to
13 the Golden Gate? Was Captain McIsaac, okay, kind of telling the
14 master where he wanted to go?

15 A. Yeah, he told him --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. So once you got over to the side shell of the
19 Cosco Busan, did you guys arrive on the starboard side or the port
20 side?

21 A. Port side.

22 Q. Okay. Did -- was the damage readily visible at that
23 point?

24 A. It was -- yeah.

25 Q. Okay. Did -- do you recall if you saw any oil basically

1 escaping the -- one of the fuel tanks?

2 A. I did.

3 Q. Okay. How -- again, we know you're not a pollution
4 response expert. Can you just describe what you saw so we can
5 kind of get an idea of the rate of flow out of that tank? What
6 did you see?

7 A. I saw what -- four or five inches coming out, you know,
8 with a head pressure on it, where it was coming out, maybe four or
9 five inches.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Maybe more and then fanning out down the side of the
12 ship.

13 Q. Okay. All right. Now, was it -- when you first saw the
14 stream of oil, was it clearing the side shell completely or was it
15 basically just coming out because of the viscosity of the oil,
16 just kind of wrapping back in and running down the plate?

17 A. That's my recollection, that there's a -- there was a
18 little head pressure on it, but that it wasn't off the side shell.

19 Q. It was coming out and --

20 A. It just -- yeah.

21 Q. And (indiscernible) into the play as it went down, okay.
22 So at that point, was anybody making any notifications or calls
23 that you're aware of to anybody?

24 A. I think Pete was calling --

25 Q. Making calls?

1 A. Oh, yeah.

2 Q. All right. So how was the decision made on the boat to
3 put Captain Hoburg on? It was because he was fresh?

4 A. He was -- yeah. He was standing by for another ship.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. You need to get -- yeah, Pete just told him you're going
7 to go up and meet Cota.

8 Q. Okay. All right, so that's how that decision got made.
9 How did you get -- how did you also go to the bridge? You did go
10 to the bridge of the ship at that time, right?

11 A. I did go to the bridge of the ship.

12 Q. Okay. Did Captain McIsaac direct that, too, or did you
13 just want to go?

14 A. Did I want to go?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. No, I didn't want to go.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. That was the result of a phone call from Frank Hoburg.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. He called me. He had been on the ship, I would guess,
21 about 10 minutes.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And he called me and he said that he hadn't seen Cota,
24 that Cota was in the head and as I recall, he said he's locked in
25 the head. And I said do you want me to come up and he goes yeah,

1 I do. And I said okay and I went to McIsaac and told him Frank
2 wants me to come up there, John's in the head, something to that
3 effect and he says go and directed the boat back alongside and I
4 went up.

5 Q. All right, so from the time Captain Hoburg departed the
6 vessel, the Golden Gate, how long was it before you got --
7 Captain Hoburg called back down?

8 A. I guess about 10 minutes.

9 Q. About 10 minutes. All right. And did that call come in
10 via VHF or via cell phone?

11 A. He called me on the cell phone.

12 Q. Okay, on the cell phone. Oh, Captain Hoburg called you
13 directly?

14 A. He called me directly on --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- the cell phone.

17 Q. All right. And was Captain McIsaac there, as well,
18 standing by you?

19 A. Captain McIsaac was on the pilot boat Golden Gate and I
20 told him what Frank had said and he said go ahead.

21 Q. Okay. All right. Where were you at that time?

22 A. I was on the pilot boat Golden Gate.

23 Q. Okay. I lost my -- so -- but Captain McIsaac was with
24 you on the Golden Gate?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Okay. I'm -- for some reason, I misinterpreted
2 something you said. I'm sorry. Okay, so when the call came in
3 from Captain Hoburg, was Captain McIsaac standing in the vicinity
4 of you when you picked the phone up?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Did you relay what Captain Hoburg had passed to you
7 about Captain Cota being in the head --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- to Captain McIsaac?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And did Captain McIsaac direct you to the bridge
12 or did you just volunteer to go because Captain Hoburg had asked
13 you to go?

14 A. He'd asked me to go. I told McIsaac the situation, said
15 Frank wanted me up there and he said go ahead and told the boat to
16 go back alongside, because we had pulled off a little bit. We
17 were still in the area.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. It was, as I say --

20 Q. Just standing by nearby, yeah.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. All right, so did Captain McIsaac have any
23 concerns there with that information being relayed to you, what
24 Captain Cota was -- the situation that --

25 A. I don't know.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. He just said go.

3 Q. All right. So the pilot boat came back alongside?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. All right. And at that point, you embarked the pilot
6 ladder up the side shell?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Can you walk me from that point from the time you hit
9 the main deck? Were you greeted by another crew person or crew
10 member?

11 A. I was greeted, but I wasn't escorted up.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I took myself up --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- (indiscernible). I was --

16 Q. Okay. And walk me through once you got up into the
17 wheelhouse. Unless there were -- are there other events between
18 the --

19 A. No. I just went up that ladder and -- you know.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Acknowledging -- you know, there's people. The crewmen
22 were moving around. They definitely were in an emergency --

23 Q. Right. And when you say that, the crewmen were running
24 around and basically, they were just in -- you could tell they
25 were in --

1 A. Nobody was running, but it was very focused --

2 Q. Right.

3 A. -- as I recall, you know, that it's not like when you
4 normally go on a ship, you know, hello. It's -- everybody was in
5 a highly functioning mode, it occurred to me.

6 Q. Like a post-incident or post-casualty damage control
7 type mode where they're trying to -- yeah, take (indiscernible).

8 A. It looked that way, sure.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Because I say, I was pretty focused on just getting up
11 the ladder --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- getting up to the bridge of the ship.

14 MR. BOWLING: Let me check the battery here. I
15 think -- we are recording, but I'm going to pause real quick,
16 Captain, if you don't mind.

17 (Off the record.)

18 (On the record.)

19 MR. BOWLING: All right, this is Larry Bowling. We had
20 a momentary break to replace batteries because I keep forgetting
21 to get batteries out at Command Center. We're back on. We've got
22 Captain Coney here with us. We're going to continue with the
23 interview.

24 BY MR. BOWLING:

25 Q. Captain, we're going to pick up where we left off with

1 regard to, basically, the -- can you pick up from the standpoint
2 of the -- you were trying to get to the wheelhouse as quick as you
3 could and you'd said that there was a lot of activity that the
4 crew was engaged in. Can you pick up from there, please?

5 A. So I went up and arrived on the bridge and the first
6 person I recall seeing was John Cota, so I was -- I greeted him
7 and then I greeted the master of the ship.

8 Q. Okay. Well --

9 A. And --

10 Q. -- what happened after that?

11 A. Well, after that, I asked John -- I supposed I asked him
12 something along the lines of how are you doing. I don't remember
13 the exact words and you know, he acknowledged, in words that I
14 don't remember clearly, that this was a very bad situation that we
15 found ourself in.

16 Q. All right.

17 A. And then asked me to witness a little alcohol -- a swab
18 test for alcohol.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So we did that. I timed him. We read the instructions
21 together and I witnessed that.

22 Q. Okay. Did the -- where did the saliva test kits come
23 from? Were they provided by the vessel or were they provided
24 by --

25 A. He had it. He --

1 Q. He had one.

2 A. I carried one, as well.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I believe that we all do. We've been issued them
5 because to be able to comply with the federal regulations, you
6 know, it's the -- kind of last measure or first measure, if you
7 will.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. The way that we can comply without getting the test guy
10 there.

11 Q. Right. Okay, so did you witness that?

12 A. I witnessed it. I watched him swab it around and then
13 we stood there and timed it for the four minutes or five minutes
14 that it takes for the stripe to appear or not appear.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Just as per the instructions on the container.

17 Q. And what happened with that test strip?

18 A. Nothing happened. No stripe appeared, which, from
19 reading indicates that there was no alcohol.

20 Q. Okay. Oh, and the instructions on that kit, did they
21 require you to keep the test material? Do you have a kit with
22 you?

23 A. With me right now?

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. No. I do with my pilot care.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. When I go on a ship, I always do.

3 Q. All right. So after you got -- after Captain Cota
4 completed the saliva test for alcohol, what happened next?

5 A. Well, the captain asked me, because Hoburg was on the
6 phone calling responders, the captain asked me, he had a list of
7 people to call and wanted to know who he needed to call, what he
8 needed to do and I said Captain, I believe that if you've -- I
9 said did you call your agent and he goes they've been informed. I
10 said I think that they'll be making these calls and I know that
11 the Coast Guard has been notified.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And I believe that Captain Hoburg is talking to, you
14 know, the spill spoilers, spill response people.

15 Q. Okay. Hoburg was on his telephone, his cell phone?

16 A. He was on his cell phone, that's correct.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So then I made a call to Eric Dohm (ph.), who was
19 sitting on a ship in Oakland, waiting on fog. And I'm not quite
20 sure why I did that.

21 Q. What ship was Mr. Dohm on?

22 A. Something D'Ital (ph.).

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Del'Ital (ph.), I think, Del'Ital
24 or D'Ital, I believe.

25 THE WITNESS: Something D'Ital, I believe.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You'll find that in that abstract
2 (indiscernible).

3 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

4 BY MR. BOWLING:

5 Q. All right, so you made a call to Eric Dohm, but I
6 interrupted you and I shouldn't have. I apologize. You said
7 you're not quite sure why you made the call.

8 A. You know, it's -- I wanted to do something, I guess.
9 You know, John had done what he needed to do. Frank was doing a
10 good job of what he was doing. So I called Eric and he carries a
11 laptop computer and he -- he was uncomfortable with the position
12 of the ship. He said, you know, at 41 feet, where you are when
13 you lost water, it's in a bad position and I said okay, good.
14 That's something for me to do, so I said to the captain and to
15 Frank, you know, he's -- I relayed his concerns. Eric is an
16 operations pilot, you know, he's used to thinking outside of his
17 own vessel --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- and he's an ex-ship master, you know, he's just super
20 squared away.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. And so at that point, I said -- we went to the paper
23 chart and they had a position and I could see his concern, you
24 know, that we -- at the draft of the ship, if we lost a lot of
25 water, there was a possibility to touch and so I mentioned it to

1 Frank and Frank said we have about an hour. I think Frank -- it
2 was probably the first thing he did and I probably shouldn't
3 speculate, but he was aware of it and we made the captain aware of
4 it. So this goes to your question what I did, that's what I did.

5 Q. Right, okay. All right, so you said -- you referred to
6 Frank, you referred to Captain Hoburg.

7 A. That's correct, Frank Hoburg, Captain Hoburg.

8 Q. Right. All right, so once you got the -- once
9 Captain Dohm brought up the issue or potential for the vessel
10 touching bottom because of the vessel draft and the potential to
11 lose water, the tide to go out, you and Captain Hoburg went to the
12 map chart, looked at the water depth and both agreed that there
13 were some concerns about potentially touching bottom?

14 A. It -- the potential for it.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. But as Frank said, we've got an hour before it starts
17 ebbing --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- you know, it would start swinging the ship.

20 Q. All right.

21 A. So I felt that he was on top of it. He was ahead of the
22 curve on that.

23 Q. Okay. At what point did -- and who made the decision to
24 shift from Anchorage 7 to Anchorage 9?

25 A. I don't know.

1 Q. Okay. All right. What -- after this -- after the time
2 when you and Captain Hoburg were at the chart, looking at the
3 water depths, can you pick me up from there with what happened in
4 the timeline of events?

5 A. I guess the next thing would be Captain McIsaac calling
6 me on my cell phone and saying bring John down, we're going to go
7 get him tested.

8 Q. Okay. Do you recall approximately what time that was?

9 A. I do not.

10 Q. Okay. And what was your action at that point?

11 A. I told John that we were going to leave the ship,
12 that -- well, that McIsaac said to come on down. I told Frank
13 that we'd be going along and was he okay.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Frank was okay and John said should we leave before the
16 Coast Guard gets here. Well, apparently, the Coast Guard was
17 going to meet us at Pier 9, at least the drug test guy was. But
18 I --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I don't know.

21 Q. Okay. So did you escort Captain Cota down to the --

22 A. We walked down together and got off the ship, yeah.

23 Q. What was Captain Cota's state of mind at that point?

24 A. I don't know. You know, state of mind is --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, that's --

1 BY MR. BOWLING:

2 Q. Yeah. What was his behavior? Did you notice his
3 behavior --

4 A. His behavior was -- it seemed to me to be quite
5 professional, you know. It's obviously a profound shock, but
6 I -- it's like training kicks in and he was just thinking about
7 what needs to be done right now, you know, and I think that he was
8 comfortable. Frank had the situation, that Captain Hoburg had it.
9 He just wanted to do everything right from that point on.

10 Q. Okay. Did -- at any time, did you see any behaviors
11 that would be considered abnormal? On behalf of Captain Cota?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. With regard to -- did you go down the pilot
14 ladder first or did he go up -- down the pilot ladder first?

15 A. I don't recall.

16 Q. Okay. Do you recall seeing Captain Cota on the pilot
17 ladder?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. Once he got -- once you two got on the motor
20 vessel Golden Gate, can you explain the interaction at that point?
21 You came back to the --

22 A. We didn't go back on the Golden Gate.

23 Q. Oh, you didn't. What vessel did you get on?

24 A. The Drake came out.

25 Q. The Drake came out.

1 A. That boat went -- the Golden Gate went back to the dock
2 while I was aboard the ship. They switched boats and switched
3 operators. Leo Moore was driving the pilot boat, the pilot boat
4 Drake, when we disembarked the ship.

5 Q. Okay. Do you have an idea what time that was? Okay.

6 A. 9:20. I don't --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I don't know. To answer your question, no, I don't
9 know.

10 Q. Okay. Would there -- there'd be a way for us to check
11 times, right, though?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. There -- through the dispatch?

14 A. Cell phones, maybe logs off of the boat.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I'm sure all that will be --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. You can find all that out.

19 Q. Okay. All right, so you got picked up by the Drake.
20 Who was the master of the Drake, do you recall?

21 A. Leo Moore.

22 Q. Leo Moore, okay. So number of persons on the motor
23 vessel Drake; it was yourself, Captain Cota, Leo Moore.

24 A. Leo Moore was driving. C.J., Chris Johnson, who is our
25 marine superintendent, was there and that's who I recall speaking

1 to on the saloon. John went up into the wheelhouse and I couldn't
2 say with certainty who was there, if Greg Wall was there or not.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Even if McIsaac was there or not, I know he was, but I
5 don't --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I don't have a mental image of seeing him, but I went
8 into the saloon and as I recall, Cota went into the wheelhouse.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. Did you have any interaction with
10 Captain Cota from that point forward on the -- while onboard the
11 motor vessel Drake?

12 A. No, we must have all got off -- I actually went out to
13 assist C.J. catch some lines --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- and then disembark, but after that, I don't think
16 that I did speak to him. He was --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- with McIsaac.

19 Q. Well, what point -- when the Drake got back to the dock,
20 did you see Captain Cota, at that point, disembark the ship?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. We all basically got off --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- at the same time.

1 Q. Okay. Did you have any conversations with him at that
2 point?

3 A. I don't recall any conversation with him.

4 Q. Okay. What was your actions after you returned to the
5 pilot station?

6 A. We were going to have a monthly meeting, so guys who
7 were around -- so it was basically just, you know, talking to
8 other guys and through a flash of inspiration, I called and left
9 my wife a message that there had been an accident, you'll be
10 hearing about it and it wasn't me. And it paid huge dividends.
11 It's something that I neglect to do, but they worry so much --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. -- you know? And it was monthly meeting and was around
14 the office, I guess, until about 1:00 or so.

15 Q. Okay. Did you see Captain Cota attend that monthly
16 meeting?

17 A. I saw him come in to the meeting, yes.

18 Q. Do you recall what time you saw him come in to the
19 meeting?

20 A. No. If I had to guess, it would be between 10:00
21 and 11:00, but I could be off on that.

22 Q. Okay. What time did the meeting start?

23 A. The meetings start at 9:30. I don't know that that one
24 got underway right on time. Well, it was underway when I got
25 there, actually. There had been a presentation for the TWIK (ph.)

1 cards and I came in right at the end of that.

2 Q. Okay. Did -- was the meeting -- was anything said about
3 the allusion at the meeting?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. What was passed at the meeting?

6 A. That there'd been an accident, that Captain Horton would
7 be running the meeting because Captain McIsaac, who usually runs
8 the meeting, was, you know, busy with this catastrophe.

9 Q. Okay. All right, so Captain Horton acted as facilitator
10 or chair of the meeting?

11 A. He said (indiscernible) would be chair of the meeting
12 because --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- it was just -- you know, it was -- what we knew at
15 the time was --

16 Q. Yeah, sure.

17 A. -- passed to --

18 Q. Do you know where Captain Isaac and Captain Cota were?

19 A. No.

20 Q. But Captain Cota came to the meeting --

21 A. Later, after that.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Well after that, so my timeline, you know, guessing --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- between 10:00 and 11:00, I could be off by as much as

1 an hour because it occurs to me, in answering the question, that I
2 was late to the meeting, that the --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- meeting was already underway --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- with this TWIK presentation. So I guess that's what
7 did when I got back, you know, I recall calling my wife and
8 chatting with some guys, but just going up to the meeting and it
9 must've been underway, so it must've been sometime after 9:30.

10 Q. Okay. Did you see Captain McIsaac and Captain Cota at
11 any time while you were in the meeting, see them pass through the
12 meeting or --

13 A. Yes, Captain McIsaac came in briefly and then had to
14 leave again and I recall seeing Captain Cota come in and he was in
15 the meeting there for a while.

16 Q. Okay. Did -- was Captain Cota there until the
17 completion of the meeting, do you recall or did he --

18 A. I don't recall.

19 Q. Okay. All right. All right, what were your
20 next -- what happened next in the timeline with regard to you?

21 A. Well, I don't really recall when the meeting ended, but
22 I remember heading home about 1300, you know, shortly after the
23 meeting. I mean, certainly, there was -- you know, talking back
24 and forth --

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. -- but I headed home about 1:00 p.m.

2 Q. Okay. By then, what was the weather condition at that
3 point?

4 A. The visibility had improved and in fact, I believe I
5 recall seeing the ship go by, Frank taking the ship down to
6 Anchorage 9 while the meeting was still in process.

7 Q. Okay. At that point -- where were you located at when
8 you think -- when you saw that?

9 A. In the meeting room --

10 Q. In the meeting room, okay.

11 A. -- upstairs at the pilot office.

12 Q. Okay. When you left the meeting, how did you exit out
13 of the pilot station down here? Do all the pilots park inside the
14 fenced area?

15 A. Yes. I -- well, I was parked inside.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I usually ride the train, but I had driven in because I
18 had finished my assignment about three o'clock that morning, so I
19 just came down to take a nap at the pilot office.

20 Q. Okay. Did you take an opportunity to go out along the
21 bulkhead where the pilot vessels moor, before you left the
22 meeting?

23 A. No, I didn't go out there.

24 Q. Okay. Was there any -- did you smell anything when you
25 came out of the meeting room? Any -- did you smell oil over here

1 at the pilot station in the air at the time?

2 A. Yes. Well, we smelled it in the meeting.

3 Q. Oh, you did?

4 A. Oh, it was a pervasive smell.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And you can see it.

7 Q. You could see it from the -- where the meeting was being
8 held?

9 A. Yeah. Well, when you go down, you'll see.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. You just -- right over the Bay and you can see it
12 floating by on the ebb.

13 Q. Okay. How thick was the -- do you -- I mean,
14 (indiscernible), but I'm sorry. What did -- tell me what you saw.

15 A. Saw oil, you know, globs of oil, not -- you know, just
16 pieces or blobs --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- but I don't know how to describe --

19 Q. Like pie pan size?

20 A. Yeah, like that, going by.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And then the smell.

23 Q. Okay. I want to go back to a comment you made back in
24 the timeline, now, we -- back to when you were on the deck of the
25 motor vessel Golden Gate, around the deck. You were on the motor

1 vessel Golden Gate. Captain Hoburg was up on the bridge. He
2 called you on the cell phone and asked you to come up to the
3 bridge.

4 A. No. He didn't ask me to come up.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I asked him do you want me to come up.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. He said, as I recall, John is locked in -- I haven't
9 seen John. He's locked in the head.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I said do you want me to come up there and he said
12 yes. And then I believe I said okay and hung up and turned to
13 McIsaac and said he wants me up there, John's -- he hasn't seen
14 John, he's in the head.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. And how long was that in your guesstimate?
16 Again, I know you weren't really watching the clock at that point,
17 but can you tell me, roughly, how long that was from the time that
18 Captain Hoburg actually left the vessel until the time you think
19 you got that call?

20 A. About 10 minutes.

21 Q. About 10 minutes. How long did it take you, in your
22 estimate, that day, to get up the pilot ladder and get up to the
23 bridge? And I know you were in a hurry, but how long did it take
24 you to get from the Golden Gate up to the bridge?

25 A. Five minutes.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I was finding my own way and I didn't use the lift.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I didn't even look for a lift, I just --

5 Q. You went the internal stair tower?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. Okay. And when you arrived at the bridge, you said at

8 that point Captain Cota was -- you greeted him on the bridge.

9 When you arrived, he --

10 A. He was the first person I recall seeing.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. And where was Captain Hoburg?

12 A. He was, as I recall, on the starboard side of the

13 bridge. There's radars there, the chart table.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. And as I recall, he was on the telephone.

16 Q. Okay. And I think I may have asked you this, but I want

17 to ask it again, just to get clear in my mind, when you first

18 greeted Captain Cota on the bridge, how did his mannerism strike

19 you? Normal, abnormal?

20 A. Not abnormal.

21 Q. Right. And don't let me put words in your mouth.

22 Describe what your assessment of --

23 A. He was --

24 Q. -- his behavior.

25 A. He greeted me, you know. He looked me in the eye. As I

1 believe I said earlier, you know, he acknowledged what an ugly
2 situation we found ourself in.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. And shortly thereafter asked me to witness the saliva
5 test for alcohol.

6 Q. Okay. Did -- at any time, did you ask Captain Cota
7 about the -- why he may have been locked in the bathroom or the
8 head?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. Did that ever come up through the course of
11 conversation with the other members of the bridge?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. Do you know if it came up in the course of
14 conversation with Captain McIsaac afterwards?

15 A. I don't know.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. No.

18 MR. BOWLING: All right. We'll actually go to the right
19 here and don't forget to identify yourself, please.

20 MR. BROWN: Steve Brown, but actually I had three
21 questions and in the last two or three minutes, Larry asked all
22 three, so you get a pass from me, Blake.

23 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

24 MR. SCHAEFER: Commander Scott Schaefer, just a couple
25 of questions.

1 BY MR. SCHAEFER:

2 Q. And (indiscernible) the oil pour out of the side of the
3 ship, could you see oil on the hull?

4 A. Yes, it was cascading down the -- in a kind of an
5 alluvial fan.

6 Q. And at any time after that, could you still see that oil
7 on the hull? What I'm getting towards is I'm trying to look down
8 the line when people came out later, whether there was oil there,
9 so I'm wondering if you were able to see anything -- so it looked
10 like it --

11 A. Well, we -- I stepped out at some point. We walked out
12 on the wing to look down and while I was on the ship, I believe
13 they stopped the flow of the oil and certainly, there'd be oil
14 there yet, I suppose, if it wasn't wiped off.

15 Q. Okay, that's good. And one -- we're trying to put
16 together a timeline. One of the entries we're looking for is when
17 Captain Hoburg relieved Captain Cota. So when you were talking
18 about Captain Hoburg, did he -- did he mention he actually saw
19 Captain Cota when he first got up there or was Captain Cota
20 already in the head?

21 A. I believe, based on our conversation, Captain Hoburg's
22 and mine, that Frank said he had not seen John, so yeah.

23 Q. And then, when you were with Captain Cota, was there
24 ever a relief process?

25 A. I didn't witness a relief process.

1 Q. And were you with Captain Cota once he came out of the
2 -- or once you saw him, were you with him from that time until the
3 two of you left?

4 A. We were on the bridge together, but as I said, I don't
5 -- you know, when I called Captain Dohm, I don't know what John
6 was doing. We were approximate the whole time, but you know, as I
7 say, I was on the telephone. I spoke to -- and after I got off
8 the telephone, I wanted to make sure that the master and
9 Captain Hoburg, you know, were apprised of Captain Dohm's concern
10 about the position of the ship. At that time, I don't know what
11 John was doing. But he was -- I know that he was there. He
12 didn't disappear. It's just I -- my consciousness was elsewhere.

13 Q. And based on the phone call from Captain Hoburg to you
14 early on there, did you believe then that Captain Hoburg was the
15 pilot of the vessel at that time? What we're trying to do is --

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. -- get a relief, so when you talked to him, you believe
18 Captain Hoburg --

19 A. Well, I believe he had the situation in hand. I don't
20 know if there had been a formal relief process. I don't know what
21 he said to the master, but I can tell you that I believe the
22 master was comfortable with the fact that Frank was now the pilot.
23 And the captain asked me, are you with the pilots and I said I am,
24 I'm here -- you know, I'm here to help you any way I can and he
25 showed me his list of calls that he felt he was required to make

1 and I told him I think, Captain, if you've informed your agent
2 that they'll be making these calls, that Frank is making the calls
3 and that Captain McIsaac is making the calls, you know, that he's
4 covered.

5 Q. So when you were on the bridge, you saw Captain Hoburg
6 and the master working together on --

7 A. Yes.

8 MR. SCHAEFER: I think that helped us. Thanks.

9 MR. NAGARAJAN: I have a couple of questions,
10 Captain Coney. Nagarajan, Fleet Management.

11 BY MR. NAGARAJAN:

12 Q. What were your concerns when you heard that Frank
13 was -- had not seen John and he was in the head? What was going
14 in your mind? Why did you think -- it's relevant now because you
15 have said it and Frank had said it, so I want to know, what were
16 your concerns at that time?

17 A. My concern was that John had hurt himself.

18 Q. About this saliva test kit, is there any disposal
19 procedures in the pilotage -- Pilot Association?

20 A. Could you repeat that question, please?

21 Q. You did the -- you witnessed the saliva test, the test
22 strip?

23 A. That's correct. The swab.

24 Q. Do you have -- the swab test. Do you have any
25 instructions from the Pilot Association for disposal of this or do

1 you have to hand it to McIsaac or somebody?

2 A. I'm not aware of any instructions, but we preserved it.
3 I mean -- we preserved it. I mean, that's -- somebody's going to
4 want to see it. The Coast Guard's going to want to see it,
5 whoever. It's not something that you would throw away.

6 Q. Who has possession of that saliva test kit as of now?

7 A. Who has possession of it?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. I do not know.

10 Q. You said you made a call to your wife to say you
11 had -- you would hear -- she would hear about an accident and did
12 you say -- could you -- paid huge dividends. What did you say? I
13 didn't get it.

14 A. Oh, with my wife, with my relationship with my wife.
15 Later, she says thank you, thank you for doing that. She worries.

16 Q. No, that's not for anything else, but I was just
17 wondering --

18 A. I shouldn't even have said it because --

19 MR. BOWLING: No, that's fine.

20 MR. NAGARAJAN: That's fine.

21 MR. BOWLING: It's the translation, no issues at all.

22 MR. NAGARAJAN: Thank you so much. I mean, my heart
23 goes out to anybody who gets into an accident, so --

24 MR. BOWLING: Yeah. You know, it's -- because of the
25 nature of the work, you know, a lot of the significant others, the

1 spouses, worry about -- you know, and so he basically was doing
2 that so that if she saw it on the news, you know, she would not
3 worry that he --

4 MR. NAGARAJAN: He's (indiscernible).

5 MR. BOWLING: Yeah. Okay.

6 MR. NAGARAJAN: Sorry, sir.

7 MR. BOWLING: That's fine. Is that all, Captain?

8 THE WITNESS: Yeah, that's all. Thank you.

9 MR. BOWLING: Rich.

10 BY MR. HURT:

11 Q. Just timeline-wise -- Rick Hurt, San Francisco Bar
12 Pilots -- when you left the bridge, had any decision been made to
13 move the ship to Anchorage 9 at that time?

14 A. I don't know, but my sense of it is no, that they were
15 working on that, that that was being discussed with --

16 MR. HURT: That's all I have.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay, thank you. Captain Holly?

18 BY MR. HOLLY:

19 Q. Yes, Rick Holly, Department of Fish and Game, Office of
20 Spill Prevention and Response. Just one quick question. Captain,
21 you mentioned that you witnessed the swab test with Captain Cota.
22 Do you recall what happened when you were witnessing that test?
23 Did he maintain possession of it, did you take it, did somebody
24 else take it or --

25 A. We set the -- he set the -- after he swabbed his mouth

1 out, he set it in the wrapper that it comes in and it sat there on
2 the fore part of the bridge. You know, we just -- I just watched
3 my watch and nothing appeared.

4 Q. But after that, you don't recall what happened to it
5 or --

6 A. No, I don't recall.

7 MR. HOLLY: Okay, thank you. That's all I have.

8 MR. TOLEDO: Gary Toledo, OSPR. No questions.

9 MR. BOWLING: Thank you. Ross?

10 BY MR. WHEATLEY:

11 Q. Just a couple here. Ross Wheatley, Coast Guard. And
12 again, just because there's it is a significant event, about the
13 test, you indicated that you observed and watched the swab test
14 performed by Captain Cota and that you timed it and that basically
15 nothing happened.

16 A. No strip appeared, yes.

17 Q. Okay. Have you ever received any type of training on
18 use of the swab?

19 A. No.

20 Q. None through the Pilots Association?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Have you ever witnessed a saliva test before?
23 Using the same type of equipment?

24 A. No.

25 MR. WHEATLEY: Okay. That's all the questions I have.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. BOWLING: Thank you.

3 BY MR. BOWLING:

4 Q. Captain, I know you don't know where this swab, the
5 strip is, but do you recall if -- do you recall any discussions
6 related to the test or the test kit between Captain McIsaac and
7 Captain Cota? Do you (indiscernible) any conversations here?

8 A. (indiscernible) when we were on the boat, they were in
9 the wheelhouse and I was in the (indiscernible).

10 Q. Okay. The -- Captain Aga was asking -- when he was
11 asking you a question -- or questions a minute ago, he asked you
12 that the point you heard from Captain Hoburg that John Cota was in
13 the head or was secured in the head, he asked you what was your
14 thought or what was on your mind and you said you were worried
15 that he would hurt himself or something to that effect. Did I
16 hear you right?

17 A. You heard me right.

18 Q. Why -- what made you draw that assumption or what made
19 you think that?

20 A. I don't know. I've thought about that a lot and I don't
21 know. It was just what I thought. It's just what came into my
22 consciousness and I had to ask Frank about it later, because it
23 was never said. We had a very short conversation. It was just
24 come on up and so I asked him and he said I had that same feeling,
25 so I didn't miss the message in my mind.

1 Q. All right.

2 A. But why he would think that, I don't know.

3 Q. Yeah. Well, has Captain Cota ever led you to believe
4 that he might have -- you know, he might hurt himself?

5 A. No. No. Not at all.

6 MR. BOWLING: Okay. I don't have any further questions.
7 Anybody else?

8 BY MR. WHEATLEY:

9 Q. On those saliva tests, do you sign them or put a
10 date/time on them, on the thing that you stick them in or
11 anything? I've never used one, either.

12 A. No, it seemed like kind of a Joe McGee thing to me. I
13 have been trained with a breathalyzer when I worked for Crowley,
14 you know. This thing -- you know, it's like okay, bring it to the
15 office and --

16 Q. Basically, the proof is that you witnessed it?

17 A. I witnessed it, but it's -- you know, you're not putting
18 a thumbprint down. There's no notary, you know. It's -- it is
19 what it is. And I don't believe it was entered in the ship's log
20 book. I mean, it was just something -- and frankly, I didn't even
21 think of doing it. John said witness this, time it, you know, and
22 I did.

23 MR. WHEATLEY: Okay.

24 MR. BOWLING: All right, Ross. I'm sorry. Nagarajan,
25 sorry.

1 BY MR. NAGARAJAN:

2 Q. Nagarajan, Fleet Management. How long do you know
3 Captain John Cota?

4 A. I guess I really met him when I became an apprentice
5 pilot. He was already a pilot. And that's when I really met him.
6 I mean, he had -- I had done ship work with him and probably
7 talked to him, but I didn't know him.

8 Q. Do you think he's your -- is he a friend of yours or
9 just a (indiscernible) association?

10 A. I don't socialize with him outside of the pilots. The
11 times that I've socialized with the Cotas was around a pilot
12 function. So he's -- it's a colleague that -- you know, this
13 association, this work we do, it's a curious bond. The whole
14 seafaring thing, you know. It's like --

15 Q. I understand. Thank you very much.

16 A. Certainly.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Captain, I think at this point,
18 we'll secure the interview and I'll stop.

19 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
20 was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: The Investigation of the Cosco
 Busan/Bridge Allision
 San Francisco, California
 Interview of Captain Blake Coney

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-MM-004

PLACE: San Francisco, California

DATE: November 16, 2007

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Karen D. Martini
Transcriber